FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Name of Action: Tyndall Air Force Base Digital Airport Surveillance Radar

The Department of Defense (DoD) proposed to construct a Digital Airport Surveillance Radar (DASR) at Tyndall Air Force Base (AFB), Florida. This proposed action is part of the National Airspace System (NAS) Program, the aviation system capital investment plan developed by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in cooperation with the DoD to modernize approach control systems in the United States and its territories. The Digital Airport Surveillance Radar is a DoD-lead contract to install airport surveillance radar equipment for both the DoD and FAA. The implementation of the National Airspace System that also included the installation of DoD Advanced Automation Systems and Voice Communications Switching Systems at DoD bases, was previously evaluated in a programmatic Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact (1995).

The Environmental Assessment for Tyndall AFB addresses the site-specific impacts of locating a Digital Airport Surveillance Radar system on Tyndall AFB, and evaluates the consequences of the Digital Airport Surveillance Radar system construction on both the natural and man-made environments. The DoD Advances Automation System and Voice Communications Switching Systems components of the National Airspace System program at Tyndall AFB would mainly be located within existing buildings, and impacts are anticipated to be minor. The primary consequences of the Digital Airport Surveillance Radar system evaluated in the Environmental Assessment involve the construction and operation of an ASR-11 radar system on Tyndall AFB.

The Digital Airport Surveillance Radar facilities at Tyndall AFB would consist of: a 20-foot tall rotating radar antenna mounted on a 77- or 87- foot tower (depending on the site selected), a concrete radar equipment shelter, an emergency engine generator in a concrete shelter, utility cabling, electronic equipment grounding systems, and a 1,000-gallon above-ground fuel storage tank. Facility construction would include separate concrete foundations for the antenna tower, the equipment shelter and the engine generator shelter and a 140-foot by 140-foot site fence. Site work should be within a 0.59-acre site (160 feet by 160 feet). Additional site improvements would include: an unpaved access road (except Site 3 would not require an access road), minor regrading, installation of geotextile fabric beneath six inches of crushed stone within the site fence and up to 10,000 feet of utility trenching to connect the site to existing duct banks, manholes or utility hook-ups. The total structure height, including lightning rods on the antenna tower, would be 106 or 116 feet depending on the site chosen.

The Digital Airport Surveillance Radar system at Tyndall AFB is needed to replace the existing AN/GPN-20 facility. The ASR-11 will improve system reliability, provide additional weather data, reduce maintenance costs, improve performance, and provide digital data input of proposed new digital automation system air traffic controller displays. While the existing AN/GPN-20 at Tyndall AFB was installed in 1980, the proposed new ASR-11 will take advantage of the significantly increased capabilities of digital technology. The proposed new Digital Airport

Surveillance Radar system will serve to accurately locate aircraft in terms of range, azimuth, and altitude; provide information regarding aircraft identification code; identify emergency conditions; and report six discrete weather precipitation levels.

Although seven areas were initially identified and evaluated as potential ASR-11 sites, four were eliminated for further consideration before the Environmental Assessment was prepared. Three of the sites were eliminated because they were located within wetlands. The fourth site was eliminated due to potential aesthetic impacts and future land use/growth conflicts. The three remaining sites (3, 6 and 7) along with the No Action alternative were evaluated in the Environmental Assessment.

The No Action alternative is not a viable option, but its environmental impacts were evaluated as compared to the viable alternatives to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act. Site 3, the proposed preferred alternative, is located on the abandoned portion of Taxiway B, approximately 5,780 feet north east of the existing air traffic control tower (ATCT). Site 6 is located within a wooded area in the northern portion of the base between Fred Bayou and Chatterson Bayou, approximately 8,130 feet north of the existing air traffic control tower. Site 7 is located 300 feet west of Florida Avenue approximately 5,600 feet west of the existing air traffic control tower. Two of the three sites (3 and 7) feature characteristics that would generally make either of these locations an acceptable location for the radar facility from operational and environmental perspectives. Site 6, however, includes a wetland that would be permanently filled and lost if the ASR-11 facility were constructed at this site. In addition, the state-protected sundew (*Drosera* genus) has been identified within the drainage ditches that line Site 6. Site 3, although surrounded by tall pines, is currently paved due to its former use as a taxiway northeast of the active runways. Site 7 is located on a grassy area maintained as lawn with US Highway 98 located 500 feet to the southwest. Site 3 is in an area with land use designated as open space. The Future land use designation for Site 7 is aircraft operations and maintenance. No cultural resources have been identified or are expected to be located at any of the three candidate sites.

Site 3, the proposed preferred alternative, has no significant adverse impacts associated with land use, air quality, water resources, safety and occupational health, hazardous substances and solid waste, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, socioeconomics, infrastructure, or energy resources would be anticipated. Approximately one-half acre of pavement with sparse grasses growing within the cracks would be excavated for the site. Additional clearing may be required along utility installation routes; however, no access road would be required for this site. Connections to both telephone and electricity service lines would require trenches approximately 380 feet long. The fiber optic connection would be approximately 5,780 feet to reach the existing air traffic control tower. Due to the site's location within a portion of an abandoned taxiway designated as airfield, no significant aesthetic impacts are expected.

If Site 6 were selected as the preferred alternative, no significant adverse impacts associated with land use, air quality, safety and occupational health, hazardous substances and solid waste, cultural resources, geology and soils, socioeconomics, infrastructure, or energy resources would be anticipated. However, an area of wetlands within the proposed site layout would be permanently lost as a result of construction at this site. In addition, a state-protected sundew species (*Drosera* genus) is known to be located within the drainage ditches alongside the site,

and could potentially be located on the site itself. Approximately one-half acre of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants would be cleared from the site; additional clearing would be required along utility installations routes and an access road. Connections to both telephone and electricity service lines would require trenches approximately 1,300 feet long. The fiber optic connection to the existing air traffic control tower would be approximately 9,720 feet long. Construction at this location is not anticipated to result in an aesthetic impact due to the lack of traffic that passes the proposed site and the natural barrier that surrounds and screens the area.

If Site 7 were selected as the preferred alternative, no significant adverse impacts associated with land use, air quality, water resources, safety and occupational health, hazardous substances and solid waste, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, socioeconomics, infrastructure, or energy resources would be anticipated. Approximately one-half acre of grasses maintained as lawn would be cleared for the site and access road; additional clearing may be required along utility installation routes. Connections to both telephone and electricity service lines would require trenches approximately 150 feet long. The fiber optic connection would be approximately 6,100 feet long, connecting to the existing air traffic control tower. The base has expressed concern regarding an aesthetic impact at this site due to its proximity to US Highway 98. The partial screening of the site provided by a row of trees parallel to the highway lessens the potential for a significant impact.

Operation of the Digital Airport Surveillance Radar system is anticipated to have minimal long-term impacts to the natural and human environments at Sites 3 and 7. The radar would generate radio frequency radiation (RFR) while operating; however, the radio frequency radiation generated would be safe to humans at ground level and is not anticipated to pose harm to the general population. During the Digital Airport Surveillance Radar system operation, fuel and other hazardous materials may be used at the site; however, use and disposal of any hazardous materials would occur in compliance with Tyndall AFB protocols and guidelines as well as applicable state and federal regulations. Consequently, it is anticipated that operational use of hazardous materials would not adversely affect the natural or human environments.

It is anticipated that few mitigation measures would be required during construction of the facility. Mufflers on construction equipment and vehicles would help minimize noise. Water would be used on disturbed areas for dust control. Grass seed or a geotextile fabric covered with crushed stone would stabilize disturbed soil.

Tyndall AFB posted a notice in the Panama City *News Herald* on December 15, 2002, and an addendum on December 23, 2002. Subsequently the installation waited for 30 days and received no significant comments from the public. In addition, the Florida State Clearinghouse, other state agencies involved in the Clearinghouse's procedural reviews and the United States Environmental Protection Agency reviewed the proposal. The Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior would not recommend selection of Site 6 and concurred with the rest of the proposal. Bay County Board of County Commissioners wanted to ensure the elimination or minimization of interference with the County's newly installed 800 MHz communications system. Responses received form all other agencies indicated no concerns, no objections or concurrence. Copies of all responses are contained in Appendix D of the Environmental Assessment.

Based on this summary of effects, along with the detailed description of the effects in the Environmental Assessment, I have determined the implementation of the Proposed Action will not have a significant environmental impact either by itself or considering the cumulative impacts. Accordingly, the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, regulations promulgated by the President's Council on Environmental Quality, and Air Force Instruction 32-7061 (revised in 32 CFR Part 989, July 15, 1999, Volume 64, Number 135, Page 38127-38143) are fulfilled and an environmental impact statement is not required.

25 AUG 03

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Date